The late Dr. Michael S. Heiser spent his career showing that the Bible's "spirit world" is much more crowded and interesting than most modern people realize. He argued that we shouldn't just lump every spirit into two boxes called "angels" and "demons."[1] Instead, the biblical writers saw a complex world of different beings with different jobs and origins. This report explains Heiser's view of these beings, including how he reconciles the "gods" of Psalm 82, the identity of the Watchers, and the destiny of the Nephilim.

What Does the Word "Elohim" Actually Mean?

To understand Heiser, you first have to understand the word *elohim*. In English, we use "God" (capital G) as a name for the Creator. But Heiser explained that in the Bible, *elohim* is actually a "place of residence" term.[4]

Think of it like the word "neighbor" or "resident." If you live in the spirit world, you are an *elohim*. If you live in the physical world, you are a human.[9] Because it describes *where* you live rather than *what* you are, the Bible uses the same word for many different things:

- **Yahweh (The True God):** The King of the spirit world who created everyone else.[5]
- **Lesser Gods:** Beings that serve on God's council.[5]
- **Demons:** Spirits associated with "unholy" ground.[12]
- **The Human Dead:** When the spirit of Samuel appeared, he was called an *elohim* because he was a "resident" of the spirit world (1 Samuel 28:13).[9]

This means Yahweh is an *elohim*, but no other *elohim* is Yahweh. He is the unique "species-unique" Boss of that realm.[9]

Solving the Puzzle: "Ye Are Gods" (Psalm 82 and John 10)

One of the most difficult puzzles in the Bible is found in Psalm 82:6, where God says, "I said, 'You are gods.'" Many people think God was talking to human judges or the Jewish people, but Heiser argued this "human view" doesn't actually make sense when you look at the original language.[31]

The Courtroom in the Sky

Heiser explained that Psalm 82 is a "courtroom drama" happening in the spirit world, not on earth.[31] Yahweh is standing in His heavenly council and putting the lesser spiritual "gods" on trial for their corruption.[31] These were the beings God put in charge of the other nations long ago (Deuteronomy 32:8).[31]

Who Received the "Word of God"?

In John 10, Jesus quotes this Psalm to defend Himself. Most teachers say the "word of God" mentioned there refers to the Jewish people receiving the Law at Mount Sinai. Heiser corrected this, pointing out two major flaws in that idea:[31]

1. **It makes Jesus ordinary:** If every Jew is a "god," then Jesus isn't special for calling Himself the Son of God.[31]
2. **It doesn't explain the anger:** If the Jews already believed they were all "gods," they wouldn't have tried to stone Jesus for saying the same thing.[31]

Heiser's correction is simple: The "word of God" that "came" was actually the **sentence of judgment** spoken by God in the Psalm itself.[31] It was addressed to the **spiritual beings** in the council, not to humans.[31]

Jesus' Winning Argument

By quoting this, Jesus was telling His enemies: "Your own Scriptures show that there are other divine beings whom God calls His 'sons.' If God can call these corrupt spirit beings 'gods,' why are you angry at Me—the one who actually comes from the Father—for saying I am the Son of God?"[31] Jesus wasn't saying we are all gods; He was claiming to be the unique "co-regent" (the second-in-command) of that heavenly council.[31]

Clarifying the "Watchers" and the Divine Council

A frequent question is whether the *elohim* of the Divine Council are the same as the "Watchers." In Heiser's view, **"Watcher" is a specific title or job description for certain members of the Divine Council.**

[13]

The Watchers as Council Members

All Watchers are *elohim* and members of the heavenly host, but the term "Watcher" refers specifically to their role as supervisors or guardians over human affairs.[13] Heiser identifies them as follows:

- **Holy Watchers:** In Daniel 4, "Watchers" are holy, unfallen members of the council who make decrees on God's behalf to show that "the Most High rules the kingdom of men."[13]
- **Fallen Watchers:** In Genesis 6 and Second Temple Jewish literature (like 1 Enoch), "Watchers" is the title used for the specific group of council members who rebelled by leaving their proper domain to mate with human women.[13]

Essentially, "Watcher" describes the *status* or *function* of a council member, similar to how "Angel" describes the function of a messenger.[13]

The Three Great Rebellions

Heiser taught that the world's spiritual conflict stems from three distinct mutinies:[10]

1. **The Rebellion in Eden:** A high-ranking throne guardian rebelled because he didn't want humans to share God's world, bringing sin and death to humanity.[13]
2. **The Rebellion of the Watchers:** As mentioned, this group of council members crossed the boundary between the spirit and human worlds to produce the **Nephilim**—physical giants who filled the earth with violence.[10]
3. **The Rebellion at Babel:** God divided the nations and put them under the authority of lesser gods. These gods eventually rebelled and became the corrupt "princes" or "powers" that rule over different parts of the earth today.[1]

Nephilim and the Origin of Demons

Heiser believed that "demons" in the New Testament are not fallen angels, but rather the **disembodied spirits of the dead Nephilim.**[12] Because Nephilim were hybrids (half-spirit, half-flesh), when their bodies died, their eternal spirits remained as "unclean spirits" seeking a new physical home.[14]

The Giant Clans: Anakim, Emim, Zamzummim, and Rephaim

Heiser placed all the giant clans encountered during the conquest—**the Anakim, Emim, Zamzummim, and Rephaim**—into the same category of hybrid Nephilim descendants.

- **Anakim:** Directly linked to the Nephilim (Numbers 13:33).
- **Rephaim:** An overarching category for these giants; Anakim were "accounted as Rephaim."
- **Emim and Zamzummim:** Regional names for these giants used by the Moabites and Ammonites.

God ordered their elimination to protect the human lineage from "demon seed" bloodlines.

Throne Guardians: The "Bouncers" of Heaven

Besides angels (messengers), God has powerful guardians who protect His sacred space:[22]

- **Cherubim:** Powerful, multi-faced beings (man, lion, ox, eagle) who act as "bouncers" for God's throne.[25]
- **Seraphim:** "Burning" or "fiery" beings, often associated with winged serpents in ancient motifs, who proclaim God's holiness.[25]

Why Can't These Beings Be Saved?

Heiser's answer to whether these fallen beings can be redeemed was a firm "No" based on the **"Kinsman Redeemer"** logic:

- **Shared Nature:** To save someone, the Savior must be a relative of the same species. Jesus became human to save humans; He is our "Kinsman."
- **Exclusion:** Jesus did not become an angel or a Nephilim hybrid (Hebrews 2:16).
- **Hybridity:** Nephilim are "genetic abominations" not intended by God's creation, placing them outside the legal reach of redemption.

Conclusion: The Great Promotion

Heiser argued that saved humans will eventually be promoted to replace the rebellious *elohim* of the council.[7] We were created "a little lower than the elohim," but in the end, we will "judge angels" and take our place in God's restored divine family.[7]

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